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Build Your Strength

August is traditionally a time of fortification before fall arrives. This month's Sadhaka has articles that will help strengthen your mind, body and resolve.

We've got a reflection on rebirth during the waning seasons, along with a special healing tea for you. There's also advice on holistic health for your children, and a doula's essay on the strength a woman can take from embracing her labor and delivery.

We've also got a recipe for a delicious Russian beet salad that will keep you strong and healthy through the late summer and early autumn days.

We hope this month's Sadhaka will nourish you during these busy summer days.

Dear Friends,

My mother was my first teacher when it came to living and health. Mom always cooked healthy wholesome meals every day for her five children and husband. In the summer my sisters and I snacked on juicy plums and cherries from our back yard fruit trees. Back in the 1960's before juicing became popular Mom was experimenting with her juicer making us fresh beet, carrot and celery juice.

Mom was my first yoga teacher. As a young teen I would imitate the poses she practiced until she took me to my first yoga class with Maria Svoboda on Queen Anne hill. I've always been impressed with my mother's understanding of health and well-being. It seemed to come naturally to her.

Two weeks ago my mother fell and broke her hip and wrist, both in three places. She had to have surgery and is now rehabilitating in a care center. The nurses and doctors are amazed at the good health, will and determination of this 105 pound 84 year-old woman. They are in disbelief that she is not on any medications and that she is healing so quickly.

I believe this is a testament to my mother's attention to a whole food organic diet, daily yoga practice, a strong spiritual belief and simple living - early to bed and early to rise! This tradition continues through me and, I hope, through my children.

A mother (father too!) sets the foundation for health for her family during pregnancy, the first foods she feeds her baby, creating ritual mealtimes and more. It is habit deeply ingrained within the body/mind and has long-term effects on one's health.

Read on for some inspiring ideas to keep you and your loved ones happy and healthy.

Blessings this summer,

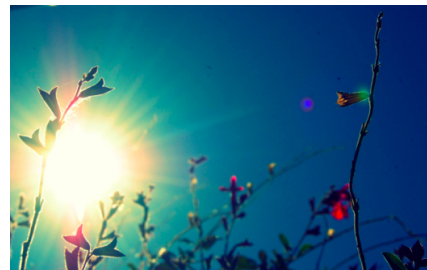
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The Waning Seasons

By Marilyn Walls

The waning seasons are upon us. It starts with Summer Solstice, where even the longest day of brightness holds the beginning of darkness.

Lightwise, it's downhill all the way through December. But, oh, what a ride--through barbecues, fresh berries staining your fingers and lips, flowers from the garden bringing yellow petals rich in immune-enhancing flavonoids to big salads, and biking along the Burke-Gilman trail. The season shines with beauty and abundance.



And the cycle continues: from peaches to grains, from flowers to roots. The gifts of Earth come to us in circles. During the growth process, seeds are planted in the garden, eventually becoming mature plants that create more seeds. Even as that plant dies, provisions from within come forth for rebirth next year.

Besides giving food and herbs, this succession nourishes faith in the progression of life. Spirit and essence return to us with new possibilities. Native peoples, living with their ears and heart to the Earth, gave dances and festivals honoring life's bountiful rhythms. From the blessing of the harvest came reassurances about spiritual questions.

We can still find meaningful symbols in the natural flow of change. In the hot days of summer, fruit and flowers offer themselves to us in the sun-filled world of sky. In fall, we begin to dig into the ground for the harvest. Steaming bowls of soup replace the sweet juiciness of summer's fare.

We learn to travel light in the summer. In autumn we move deeper inside. We find sturdy roots, and they ground us. We discover our source as we experience the magic of how naturally Mother Earth nurtures us.

In August, the festivals of the harvests began for ancient peoples. It was their time to gather and store for the resting of the dark phase to come. Likewise, we can be thankful at this transition to reap the rewards of our personal blooming and growth. We can recognize our own ripening, our maturation into someone who can contribute to the community and the healing of Earth. We can store emotional strengths for the days ahead when much will be held in suspension.

A tea for the warming seasons would do well to be a building tonic: something from the generousities of summer to buttress your immune system for the coming winter. While the native peoples on our continent collected blueberries, huckleberries, and cranberries, in Europe the ancients decorated their harvest rituals with bilberries. What makes all these vaccinium cousins so beneficial to your health are anthocyanins, the [flavonoids](#) which give these berries their luscious blue, red and purple colors.

There are many reasons for putting more [anthocyanins](#) into your diet. Research indicates the flavonoids can prevent cardiovascular disease. The antioxidant value of anthocyanins increases the Vitamin C levels in cells, decrease leakiness and breakage of capillaries (e.g. bleeding gums and varicose veins), and are most effective flavonoids for tumor suppression and liver protection.

Anthocyanins also have properties which help eyesight and prevent macular degeneration. They can stabilize blood sugar blues and are useful in treating diabetes. Bilberries, though small and not as juicy as their American kin, are the anthocyanin champions of their family. They are tasty to eat dried, and are a healthy addition to baking. Bilberries are the main ingredient in the waning seasons tonic accompanying this article. It is a tea to support you physically and mentally as you collect and spread your feasts while letting go of your spent resources.

Waning Seasons Herbal Tonic

- 2 parts bilberry-- For better vision and a stronger heart
- 1 part calendula-- soothing to irritations, Carotenoids can improve eyesight and decrease risk of cancer
- 1 part lemon balm-- To relieve tension and aid in digestion
- 1 part oat straw-- Nervine tonic rich in calcium and magnesium
- 1 part prickly ash-- Warming. Stimulates circulation and lymphatic

system. (this herb will add a bitter taste to an otherwise yummy tea. For that reason only it is optional.)

Preparation: Pour a cup of boiling water over 1 teaspoon of herbal mixture. Let steep 15-20 minutes, strain and drink. Two or more cups of this tea a day is fine.

Marilyn Walls is a nutritionist, herbalist, and Craniosacral therapist. This article is reprinted from The Sadhaka, Vol 5, No. 1.

Celebrate World Breastfeeding Week

World Breastfeeding Week is August 1 through 7. This year's theme is "Just 10 Steps, The Baby Friendly Way."

World Breastfeeding Week commemorates the signing of a 1990 WHO/UNICEF global breastfeeding initiative to protect, promote and support breastfeeding.

World Breastfeeding Week is celebrated in 120 countries.



Holistic Care for Your Little One

By Kathi J. Kemper, MD, MPH

Does holistic health care mean that you only feed your child brown rice and granola? Is it something mystical and unattainable? Is it any fun?

No. No. and Yes! Holistic care is all encompassing, not limiting. It is practical, based on common sense and experience. And it is fun!



Holistic simply means caring for your child's body, mind, emotions and spirit in the context of your family's values and beliefs. It does not mean that every ear infection needs to be treated with antibiotics or that antibiotics should never be used. Mostly it means that you exercise common sense in considering the bigger picture when it comes to taking care of your child. It focuses on prevention rather than just fixing things once they've fallen apart, and builds healthy self-esteem, healthy relationships and a healthier planet.

Here are five simple things you can do to make sure your baby grows up healthy:

Breast feed your baby for at least a full year. Breast milk alone is the perfect food for babies during the first four to six months of life. Breastfed babies have fewer colds, fewer ear infections, less diarrhea and grow up to be an average of 8 IQ points smarter than formula-fed babies!

Don't smoke and don't allow others to smoke around your baby. Quitting smoking right now reduces your risk of cancer and heart disease and reduces your baby's risk of developing asthma, allergies, behavior problems, and recurrent colds and ear infections.

Emphasize organic fruits and veggies and whole grains. Once your child is weaned, encourage a diet based on whole grains, and organic fruits and vegetables- at least five servings of fruits and vegetables daily. A fast food diet may be convenient at the moment, but leaves a legacy of heart disease and cancer later on. Plus, its fun for families to eat together and know that they are supporting a healthy planet.

Turn off the television and go outside. We Americans have one of the highest rates of obesity in the world. That goes along with our per capita consumption of remote controls and cable TV. Too much television not only reduces healthy activity levels, it encourages eating high fat, high sugar convenience food and portrays violence as acceptable and even glamorous. Join your child in a game of tag or hide and go seek. Go for a walk together, look at the sky; smell the leaves; taste the rain.

Preach and practice kindness, forgiveness, and generosity to yourself, your child, your family, friends and acquaintances. Teach your children that they are loved and lovable and that it is OK to make mistakes. Growing up with a healthy sense of self-esteem and respect for others goes a long way toward preventing the violence and heartache that permeate our society. Kindness and forgiveness are the greatest healing balms known to humankind!

That's it; those are the basics. Herbs, vitamins, acupuncture, homeopathy, medication and surgery do have their places, but you'll need a lot less of any of them if you stick to the basics of a healthy, holistic lifestyle for yourself and your child.

This article is reprinted from the Sadhaka, Vol. 3, No. 2.

Embrace Your Labor, Feel Your Power

By Christina Cramer, LMP

I chose to be a doula because I have seen an essential part of the tradition of human support in childbirth missing in modern medicine.

Throughout human history, birth has not only been the physical function of bringing forth new life, but a spiritual and emotional act of transformation into mother and child.

Modern medicine's attempt to comfort the birthing mother by anesthetizing her from her experience has introduced chemical blocks which are effective at erasing pain. But when the mother's consciousness is numbed, a part of her connection to her experience can also be erased, and she may lose one of the most profound gifts of giving birth: her choice to experience her own spirit and to actively embrace motherhood.

The latest in birth technologies cant deny the power of the human spirit and its unborn yearning for meaningful, loving and intimate moments with one another. Birth as a part of life in a community gives us opportunity. It is one of the rare times in which our spirit can powerfully manifest itself and potentially inspire us for the rest of our lives.

However, in this day and age, we are encouraged to push the spirit aside. To allow for self expression, we need respect and protection. In my experience as a doula, I attend to that spirit with the birthing mother and her partner, and hold the space for its safe and fullest expression.



With continuous support and care, we can help the mother to channel her energy to deliver a new human being. Labor with spirit is allowed to unfold at its own unique pace, and is truly magical.

Birth doesn't ask a woman to be stoic. It is an open invitation for her to feel her power. It is the power of her spirit moving through her, and this is truly a gift.

This article is reprinted from The Sadhaka, Vol. 3, No. 2.

Divine Russian Beet Salad

By Shawna Gamache

Don't be intimidated by their claret hue! Beets are delicious, easy to prepare, and they are packed with antioxidants, folate, manganese, potassium and Vitamin C.



I learned how to make this Beet Salad in St. Petersburg, Russia in 1998 from my glamorous and dramatic host mother, Marina. It was her birthday (she wouldn't say which one!), and she took the day off work to prepare this salad along with a spicy carrot salad, pickled herring, plates of bread and cheese and, of course, lots of champagne and vodka. Several dozen friends crammed into her tiny apartment to kiss her cheeks and toast her health: Na Zdarovye! (Nah Zda Rove Yah)!

This salad takes some time to make, usually more than an hour. But it is gorgeous, packed with nutrients and keeps well. Bring it to a dinner party or just keep it in your fridge for a week, doling out delicious scoops with each meal.

May this recipe bring you great health and many compliments!

P.S. If you don't want red hands, you can wear rubber gloves when handling the beets. But your hands won't get *that* red if you go gloveless.

What you will need:

Beets- 3-4 small or two bigger beets, preferably red

Carrots- 2 small or 1 big one

Potatoes-3 small, 2 medium or 1 big one- Russets work well

Shallot- 1 small (or half a medium onion will do)

Dill Pickles- 2 (briny dills like Bubbies will be most authentic but commercial dills work fine)

Frozen peas- about 1 cup

Fresh Dill- a small handful

Olive Oil- about 3 Tablespoons

Salt

What you will do:

Put two pots of water on the stove and bring them to a boil. You will use one for

the beets, which boil longer, and one for the carrots and potatoes. Boiling time varies with the size of the veggies. You want them pretty soft but not mushy.

Peel the carrots and potatoes but leave the skin on the beets; just rinse them, cut them from their stems and put them in the boiling water.

Meanwhile, dice the shallots and the pickles into teeny tiny little cubes, about 1/4 inch if you can. You can use a processor if you like. Chop the fresh dill.

Put the diced pickles and shallots into a large glass bowl with the chopped dill. Add the frozen peas, the olive oil and several pinches of salt to taste. Put the bowl into the fridge.

When the potatoes and carrots finish boiling, plunge them into a bowl of cold water to retain their color (carrots) and cool them. When they are cool, dice them into tiny little cubes and add them to the bowl. (You don't want to process these guys or the beets as they'll just turn to mush.)

When the beets are done boiling, plunge them into their own cold water bath. When they are still a little warm, take them out and remove their skin. It should just slough off in your hands with a little pressure. Chop them into little cubes and add them to the bowl.

Mix everything together in the bowl. You may want to add a little more salt to taste and a little more olive oil to make sure everything is coated (not too oily!). Chill for at least 45 more minutes to let all the flavors marry.

For Babies: My 13-month-old daughter loves this salad! She's been eating it since she was about 9 months old. I just make a little separate mix for her, removing the shallots and adding a few tablespoons of hot water before chilling in order to soften it a bit for easy chewing. I also add in a bunch more frozen peas, but that's just her preference.

***Gamache** is co-founder of **Moms Alive**, a blog and website that aims to inspire and inform new Seattle-area mamas. She is also editor of *The Sadhaka*.*

Photo by [Nosha](#).

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